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M E D I A R E L E A S E

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DHS PARTNERS WITH BOOKS FROM BIRTH TO BENEFIT LOW INCOME CHILDREN *THOUSANDS OF BOOKS TO BE DELIVERED TO SHELBY COUNTY CHILD CARE AGENCIES*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) will work with the Governor's Books from Birth Foundation® (GBBF) to expand the libraries of more than 2,400 child care agencies serving low income infants, toddlers and preschoolers across the state. Each agency is slated to receive a full set of 60 age-appropriate books, thereby creating their own 'Imagination Library.'

"We are delighted to be able to help further the learning and literacy of our most vulnerable children," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "We believe the Imagination Library is another wonderful tool to improve early childhood education in Tennessee."

Any DHS-licensed agency serving low income children participating in the subsidy program (also known as the certificate program) will receive a full set of 60 Imagination Library books. Priced at \$120 each, DHS' purchase of the book sets will be funded by federal child care dollars that are earmarked for quality improvements. Nearly 20,000 children under age five attend 600 agencies participating in the certificate program in Memphis and Shelby County. The books will be delivered in the fall.

Created in 1996 by Dolly Parton in her hometown of Sevierville, Tenn., the Imagination Library mails a new, age-appropriate, hardcover book every single month to registered children from birth to age five, at no cost to the family and regardless of income. A blue-ribbon committee of childhood education experts selects the books for the Imagination Library, which includes such classics as *The Little Engine That Could*, *The Snowy Day*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*.

"Reading is fundamental to learning and early childhood development," said Lady A. Bird, president of the Governor's Books from Birth Foundation. "The Foundation is committed to ensuring low income children are better prepared for kindergarten by providing universal access to the Imagination Library – at home, as well as in child care and pre-school settings. We are incredibly grateful that our partnership with DHS is allowing us to make the most of the treasured resource that is the Imagination Library."

Along with the book sets, each agency will receive a supply of Imagination Library registration brochures so that children and their families have the opportunity to receive the books at home. Through its partnership with DHS, the GBBF seeks to bolster enrollment of eligible children in the Imagination Library on a statewide basis. More than 170,000 Tennessee children –nearly 46 percent of the state's eligible population– are currently registered in the program and will receive a free book in the mail this month. Over 19,000 children, or 28 percent of the county's eligible population, are currently registered in the program and will receive a free book in their mailboxes in August.

The Governor's Books from Birth Foundation was created in 2004 by Governor Phil Bredesen and currently serves Imagination Library organizers in all 95 counties by providing fund-raising, public relations, and program support. To learn more about the Imagination Library program in your county, or for information on how to register a child, visit www.GovernorsFoundation.org or call 1-877-99-BOOKS.

For more information on child care services, visit: http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/cc_main.htm .
For a list of agencies that will receive the books, visit: <http://state.tn.us/humanserv/news/news.htm> .

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